

Three Minutes - 12

Keeping up His Word

satyaM vidhAtuM nija
bhR^itya bhAShitaM
vyAptiM ca bhUteShu
akhileShu ca AtmanaH
adR^ishyata ati adbhuta
rUpam udvahan
stambhe sabhAyAM na
mR^igaM na mAnuSham
(Veda Vyasa, Srimad Bhagavatam 7-8-18)

vidhAtum = to prove
bhAShitam = the words (of)
nija bhR^itya = His impeccable servant
satyam = (to be) true
ca = and
vyAptam = the pervasion
akileShu = (amongst) all
bhUteShu = living things
ca = and also
AtmanaH = of His
ati adbhuta = very beautiful
rUpam = form
adR^ishyata = (to be) seen
sabhAyAm = in the middle gathered
people
stambhe = in the pillar
udvahan = was taken
na mR^igam = (which was) not an
animal
na mAnuSham = nor a human being

This verse is in shrImad bhAgavatam, one among the eighteen purAna-s (old story) composed by shrI veda vyAsa, a celebrated seer. In this chapter, vyAsa described the nR^isimha avatAra (lion faced human form of

the Lord). prahlAda is a pure devotee (bhakta) of Lord shrIman nArAyaNa, despite being born in the demon (rAkShasa) dynasty. His father, hiraNyakashipu, who had an awful hatred towards the Lord, tried to kill his son several times. But prahlAda's devotion to the Lord was full and firm, which helped him outlive all those murderous attempts.

One day, hiraNyakashipu got so wild that he dragged prahlAda next to a pillar and questioned, "You say that your God is everywhere! Is he here in this pillar?". prahlAda politely answered "Yes, my father. He is in that pillar and for that matter He is inside every single atom". hiraNya was further enraged and used his mace in attempt to break the pillar to disprove his son. Suddenly, the Lord nR^isimha appeared with a roar. To prove the words of His devotee is true and to show His presence, the Lord made Himself to appear in a beautiful form which was neither an animal nor a man from that pillar inside the King's court.

Why did the Lord appear at that time and from that pillar? vyAsa answers 1. prahlAda was tortured, but until then, he was not to put to test to demonstrate the presence of the Lord 2. Lord has to show His pervasiveness to the world and that He pervades everywhere and in anything. To show that, He could have appeared from something else, but He didn't. He came through the same pillar that hiraNya was pointing. Both were to prove prahlAda's words are truthful.

namAzhvAr brings this incident very aptly in two words - There (angu), then itself (appozhudE). As usual, AzhvAr-s comprehend complex philosophies into simple and precise Tamil words.

The object of a superior soul is to speak nothing but the truth.

One may find hard to come across a purANa story that has as much beauty, conviction, and poignance like nR^isimha avatAra.

What we learn from here -

1. Speak the truth and God helps you.

Here, Lord lakShmi nR^isimha appeared for only one reason - a single honest soul's prayer.

2. Be righteous and support those who are.

It is a moral obligation to help those who lead a virtuous life because they are just like you.

3. Be steadfast on principle.

By following moral standards, one may find enemies within, like prahlAda did. Even if you find opposition from your own family and friends, don't sway away from what you believe in.

4. Believe, Lord acts unexpectedly.

One may question, why Lord hasn't done this, or that. He is independent and doesn't have to answer anyone to prove His power or presence. He does so whenever He finds it appropriate.